DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 606 CS 208 168

AUTHOR Bryant, Paul T.; And Others
TITLE Trends and Issues in English Instruction, 1984--Four Summaries.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Censorship; Computer Assisted Instruction; Computer Programs; *Educational Needs; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; *English Curriculum; *English Instruction; English Teacher Education; Humanistic Education; Language Arts; Literature Appreciation; Mass Media; *Professional Associations; Teacher Effectiveness; Visual Literacy; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

Summaries of trends and issues in the teaching of English that have been identified by four commissions of the National Council of Teachers of English are presented in this report. The first summary in the report, by P. Bryant of the Commission on Composition, stresses the need for prospective English teachers to be well-grounded in the techniques of writing as well as in a current knowledge of how students learn, raises the question of teaching academic discourse, stresses the role of writing in a core curriculum, and raises the need for quality software used with microcomputers in the teaching of writing. The second summary presented is by D. England of the Commission on Media and identifies the following concerns and issues: new ways of integrating media into the teaching of English, computer use skills relevant to English and the language arts, declining visualization ability as a result of visual media, and the effect of computers on student thinking skills. In the third summary, by E. Lundy, members of the Commission on Curriculum express concern over the role of the humanities in a healthy technological society, the need to support the development of sound writing instruction at all levels, and the need to support curricula built on the best of current theory and practice. The final summary offered is by D. Turner of the Commission on Literature and identifies eight trends and issues, among them the decline of student exposure to literature, school board insistence on the use of anthologies, growing censorship, and inadequate teacher training in literature. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED240606

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Trends and Issues in English Instruction, 1984--Four Summaries.

Paul T. Bryant
David A. England
Eileen Lundy
Darwin T. Turner

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Paul T. Bryant

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS208168

Trends and Issues in Composition and the Teaching of Composition

1983

At its November 21-22, 1983, meeting during the annual meeting of the Council, the Commission on Composition identified and discussed a number of trends and issues current in composition and the teaching of composition. What follows is a summary of that discussion.

The Commission agreed that at the head of the list of issues should be the question of teacher preparation. Prospective teachers should be well grounded in the techniques of writing as well as in a current knowledge of how students learn.

In discussing teacher preparation, the Commission also concluded that there should be greater interchange among the commissions about mutual concerns, such as literacy and teacher preparation.

NCTE was judged to be behind the times in dealing with developmental writing issues and members of the Commission felt that the Council should involve itself more actively in promoting attention to this area of concern. Developmental writing clearly is a necessary component of the development of a literacy base and clearly part of the basics being so much discussed at the present time. This would include consideration of the role of grammar in teaching basic writing.

The Commission felt that NCTE should develop a position on tracking in the public schools. In particular, more work needs to be done on the extent to which a student's social, economic, and cultural background may affect performance in school and thereby determine the kind of tracking to which that student might be subjected. As a corollary, the question was raised of the possible relationship of tracking to racial bias. The

Commission was not clear as to whether an existing group within NCTE should undertake this study or whether a special group might have to be created.

The Commission felt that greater attention should be devoted to learning and understanding the views and roles of parents and students in the teaching and learning of English. This might include participation by parents and students in NCTE programs and solicitation of their views by NCTE deliberative and policy making bodies. It was pointed out that affiliates now occasionally include parents and students in their regional conferences as a way to develop and/or determine the support of these groups for their efforts. This kind of involvement should be encouraged both at the regional and at the national levels.

Concern was expressed for greater articulation among teachers of English at all grade levels, kindergarten through the university. Interaction of all levels could be promoted by NCTE if specific sessions at NCTE meetings were designed to involve teachers at all levels in an exchange of interests, concerns, and ideas. A corollary to this, of course, would be efforts to increase membership particularly at the elementary level.

Testing was another issue of concern to the Commission on Composition. Required competency testing is of course an issue of importance. The development of the National Assessment, now that it is moved to the Educational Testing Service, is of interest. The principal issue is how best to test writing, with the underlying assumption that any test of writing should include the act of writing.

Other issues of concern include merit pay for teachers, in conjunction with the question of <u>adequate</u> pay for teachers, and with the question of the relation of merit pay to results in the testing either of the teachers or of their students. All of this relates to the question of teacher

competency and preparation for teaching composition, in the preservice programs, in service programs, and the preparation of administrators to administer such programs.

Another issue is the role of writing in a core curriculum: writing across the curriculum as a unifying element in every student's education.

The various concerns in discussing developmental writing, teacher competency, teacher preparation, and writing across the curriculum lead to the broader question of teaching academic discourse (the set of conventions that characterize college writing). To what extent should academic discourse be taught in the public schools to all students? The teaching of such discourse might be considered part of the effort to afford universal access to higher education for all students capable of and interested in taking advantage of that opportunity. The whole question of teaching academic discourse would include ways to initiate students into its use, including the teaching of developmental or basic writing; writing across the curriculum; and the long continuing controversy over the students' right to their own language.

A subject of increasing interest in the schools is the teaching of writing nonfiction prose in various special forms. Elements in such teaching might include argumentation and formal logic; on occasion there has been such heavy emphasis on these subjects that affective considerations are lost from the teaching of writing. A trend noted in the teaching of such things as argumentation, formal logic, and the research paper, is that often there is a movement of subject matter downward from college to high school to lower grades. This was seen as an unfortunate development in most cases.

The Commission feels we need to know about the development of writing centers and peer tutoring, in view of the fact that they are becoming more

common at the college and university level and are now moving into some secondary schools. We need to know more about the resources for those centers (are they sometimes used as a "cheap" way to solve problems?), the actual and desirable qualifications of the staffs of those centers, and the relationship of those centers to the regular composition program. There should be careful articulation and integration of those centers to avoid their use as an excuse for other faculty to stop teaching writing.

The Commission expressed concern for the quality of software used with micro computers in the teaching of writing. They noted a trend toward commercial programs that exclude the instructor from the teaching process. They suggested that teachers, administrators, and parents need to have some guidelines for buying software.

This concluded the Commission's discussion of trends and issues in the teaching of composition.

Paul T. Bryant
Director

SUMMARY OF MEDIA COMMISSION IDENTIFICATION

OF TRENDS AND ISSUES

DENVER, 1983

DAVID A. ENGLAND, COMMISSION CHAIR

There were ten trends/issues articulated by the members of The Media Commission. The texts of these statements are provided in two forms: the original, hand written statements prepared in Denver, and a typed transcript of those statements. Of the ten statements, four had to do with more general concerns of media educators, i.e., concerns which cut across specific media. And, of those four, two had to do with the integration of media study, as integration was variously defined. Four statements pertained to computer technology and two dealt with television and visual literacy.

The statements of issues/trends were as follows:

1. New Ways of Integrating Media Into the Teaching of English
2. Integrating Media Into English Language Arts
3. Continued Ignoring of Media Related Competencies and Objectives in Teacher Certification Programs
4. Noncontextual Use of Media
5. Defining Computer Use Skills Relevant to English and the Language Arts
6. How Computers are Affecting the Thinking of Our Students
7. Computers and Ethics in the Age of Secondary Orality
8. The "Computer Bandwagon"
9. Declining Visualization Ability as a Result of Visual Media
10. Attitude Shaping by Commercial Television

Of course the four computer-related issues and trends are conspicuous in this list as one might expect. The specific thrust of each statement is significant as the four statements combine to express the Commission's feelings.

"Integration" was discussed in several contexts. The traditional concern with integrating media studies into the curriculum; the notion of a "springboard" approach to media use (see statement one); and the integration of media studies <u>across</u> the curriculum (see statement two).

Finally, of the two issues related to visual literacy, statement nine was cited as an area of emerging interest, while statement ten suggests a now perennial issue. The four computer issues were all, logically enough, cited as areas of emerging interest..

TRENDS/ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY MEDIA COMMISSION

DENVER, 1983

1. New Ways of Integrating Media Into the Teaching of English

New research in areas like semiotics, structuralism, cognitive psychology, and visual thinking have suggested new directions for the use of media in English education. Far from the "springboard" approach (show a movie, write about its content), some teachers - informed by recent studies by Bruner, Solomon, Pairio, Bransford, et. al. - are exploring the perceptual and cognitive structures underlying all media, including writing. Film, for example, is being studied as a language, film-making as a form of composing, film viewing as a mode of thinking and these studies have implications for written composition, reading, and reasoning. William Costanzo

2. Integrating Media Into English Language Arts

Various approaches and techniques exist to integrate media into not only the English Language Arts programs but also over the entire curriculum. These approaches may be both old and new: from an awareness in the 60's as to the use of film as well as from the 80's with computers. The charge of this committee on media should be to re-define those older strategies and identify and encourage newer and creative approaches to integrating media <u>across</u> the curriculum. For example, ten years ago at Willowbrook High School, as part of a documentary program, I took the responsibility to have the film <u>WAR GAME</u> shown - a devastating exposition by the BBC in 1967 of what nuclear war is really about a'la <u>The Day After</u>. Various teachers from different disciplines participated in the planning, showing, and discussing of the film both during the day with students and at night with parents. Thus the film was approached by teachers in Science, Social Studies, Humanities, Music, and English. My basic premise was/is that film and media generally should not be compartmentalized and pigeonholed into a particular area or unit, but that film encompases several disciplines and art forms. The task of this committee is to reawaken teachers to this fundamental interrelatedness of film as a significant and creative window to the world and humanity. This can be done by informing teachers and boards of education the multiple ways which have been successful as well as challenging teachers to create newer approaches.

Ralph J. Amelio

3. Continued Ignoring of Media Related Competencies and Objectives in Teacher Certification Programs

Given that more and more power and control over teacher education is assumed by State Departments of Education, how English teacher preparation is defined is increasingly being taken out of the hands of schools of education, professional organizations, etc. In the rush to assess teachers' competence in an era of back to basics madness, there is less and less room or support for media related competencies or objectives for teachers as "competency test" makers focus on traditional and <u>testable</u> version of basic competencies for teachers. David England

4. Noncontextual Use of Media

Noncontextual use of media frequently occurs in schools and school districts that are not media-enlightened. This takes many forms:

1) schoolwide showing of a film as purely entertainment

2) use of a film or television program to fill a class period when a teacher is unprepared or uninspired.

3) viewing of films or television programs with worthwhile themes or content without pre and post viewing activity and/or tie-in with a cohesive curriculum.

Often the schoolwide or grade wide showing of a film is a reward for behavior or performance in elementary or middle school. Frequently an administrative function, problems lie in the selection of purely entertainment films that will occupy students and the absence of any discussion (pre or post) accompanying the viewing experience. The effect on students' perception of viewing activities as similar to that when a student body attends a pep rally en masse. Education of administrators is desperately needed here.

It is a sad reality that film and television are often used in classrooms as "fill-ins" rather than for content and instructional soundness. Indoctrination and re-education of teachers, administrators, supervisors, and evaluators are a crying need.

At least films and television programs thematic and content merit are finding their way into some classrooms. Unfortunately their value and effect are seriously limited when they are used without pre and post preparation and treatment or as part of a cohesive curriculum. Integration of media use and study into the English/Language Arts Curriculum provides optimum value for the student and maximum satisfaction for the teacher. This concept needs proliferation. Patti Slagle

5. Defining Computer Use Skills Relevant to English and the Language Arts

As computer use in schools grows, it is critical that teachers of English define the users of the computer that will assist students in their classrooms. Much attention has been directed to the computer as a deliverer of instruction; too little effort has been made in the use of the computer as a tool. Certainly, this convention devoted sessions to word processing and the teaching of composition. There are, however, other uses of the computer that our students need to master, most notably using the computer for research - how to access data bases, how to define search terms, how to evaluate information, how to estimate costs for data searchers. Students could also set up their own data bases to manage the data they collect.

Julie McGee

This issue is only one example of a computer related skill that our students will need. In too many schools, math teachers are defining what "computer literacy" is; too often, that turns out to mean programming for everyone. (That sort of training is as relevant to many students as teaching everyone who wants to drive a car to be an auto mechanic.) I would like to see NCTE define the "new literacy" that encompases computers, as well as other media forms.

6. How Computers are Affecting the Thinking of Our Students

Some Examples:

1. Word-based adventure games urge the user to form mental imagery, including mental maps. (For example: "You're in a car. There's a shovel on the ground A light shines through a tunnel ahead. A stream flows behind you underground. What do you want to do?) Do such programs influence the ability of children to create visual contexts for a written text, to exercize their imaginations

in ways that television or film do not encourage?

2. Will the sequential logic of computer programming encourage a new generation of students to think differently than those who grew up with the holistic habits of TV viewing? William Costanzo

7. Computers and Ethics in the Age of Secondary Orality

Language scholar Walterong has characterized contemporary linguistics as a period of "secondary orality" - by this he means we have passed from a society dominated by print literacy into one dominated by terminals, which while based on knowledge of print require a radically different set of skills. - Pre-literate cultures (a period of "orality") can be demonstrated to be remarkably different from the subsequent age of literacy - One points to a number of aspects of each of these stages and raises potentially dramatic issues for the English teacher in a world of film, radio, T.V., telephones, and satellite communications - computers add a new dimension to our educational concerns. On one level computers are decendents of our educational technology but on another they use print (unlike most T.V. film, and of course radio and telephone communication)

All this is by way of introduction to what I call telecommunication ethics - by what standards do we come to judge the social values inherent in each medium? How do young people become aware, not just of technology, but of its effects on our behavior? Peter Haratonik

8. The "Computer Bandwagon"

It almost seems sophomoric to state the obvious fact that technology should only be used to facilitate learning, not to stand in its way. Yet virtually all technological developments have impacted the educational field with some disturbingly predictable consequences. Initial predictions of tremendous gains for learners, fear of equipment for the teachers, many applications with little verifiabile results, sporadic adaptions of equipment and techniques in locations as suited to specific circumstances.

Will computers follow this sad track record for radio, film and TV? (Only the childhood reality seems to have made it!) I suggest we urge (as has been done in the past) that educational objectives be clarified and kept up front - to be checked and rechecked against any and all uses of computers in education. Such a truism, but surely needed more now than ever before. Dick Ball

9. Declining Visualization Ability as a Result of Visual Media

A question has arisen in the past few years: Is children's mental visualization ability declining because visual media are providing the images? This question was posed here at the Denver conference in the opening remarks by the chair of the International Assembly program. She said that her bright students at the New York High School of the Performing Arts are unable to visualize scenes in literature and she presented this as a major problem that we are facing in education in the U.S.

I can look at the question in two ways:

1) If images are given along with the words, on TV for instance, perhaps the lack of resistance (because you don't have to create the image yourself) could weaken the ability to mentally form those images. That could be a problem - or a <u>change</u> - in thinking ability.

2) on the other hand, all those images fed to children by film, TV, or computer could help teach them to think in visual images. The visual image becomes a more pervasive mode of thinking like verbal language is a mode of thinking.

Perhaps it's a change in thinking - not necessarily a problem - and we should focus on how to develop its advantages. Nancy Thompson

10. Attitude Shaping by Commercial Television

We all understand that the people who determine what we are allowed to see on television tend to display a cynical disregard to anything that fails to satisfy the commercial needs of the sponsor. This is true of both programming and commercial content. If, for example, the most effective way to pitch laundry products is to indicate that the laundry room is the rightful domain of women, this is the way the product will be advertised, regardless of the questionable attitudes it validates. Similarly, if a program surveying mindless violent fantasy (ie. The A-Team) garners a significant share of the audience, it will be received so long as its popularity remains, and though there is a growing body of evidence that there is an apparent cause and effect relationship between TV violence and aggressive behavior, as long as violence sells products, violence will be a regular feature on home screens. Complicating the picture is MTV, whose video adaptations of popular songs are replete with agressive behavior, and sexual inuendo (some of it hardly inuendo), and whose intended audience is largely comprised of teens and adults under the age of thirty (what's more, where broadcast television must conform, at least, to the minimum standards of self-imposed code restrictions and some FCC regulations, MTV, as a service sold to individual cable operations, is a subject only to local community standards).

So - where does this put NCTE? Clearly, we are not going to make TV go away or even change it substantially by railing at it. However, it is our obligation to educate students to cope with television's hidden messages, to recognize false attitudes and destructive values. Moreover, it should be our function to help students develop good taste and intelligent viewing habits which will lead them away from the tawdry and anti-social offerings.

NCTE can encourage more (non-computer) media-oriented conference programs at national meetings; further the NCTE leadership can encourage affiliates to do the same. Finally, NCTE can establish active liason with TV action groups such as Action for Children's Television to attempt to influence network programmers and commercial sponsors to modify their current approaches to their audiences. David Burmester

REPORT

of the

COMMISSION ON CURRICULUM

December, 1983

Elizabeth Cowan has sent forward the report of the results of the survey conducted by the Commission on Curriculum. This report adds a summary of trends and issues as seen by the members of the commission and a list of candidates for the Commission on Curriculum. In addition, we , the members of the Commission, in the course of our discussion of trends and issues, identified the contents of the two programs we hope to sponsor at next year's meeting in Detroit. You will find a description of those programs in the last section of this report.

TRENDS AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ON CURRICULUM

The members of the Commission on Curriculum see the following trends and issues as topics for NCTE programs, projects, publications, and research:

1. the need to communicate a cohesive ideaa of research and development in writing instruction to the national audience and, in particular, to educational administrators at all levels;
2. the continuing need to support the development of sound

writing instruction at all levels by

a) clearly translating research into practice,

b) supporting university-school cooperation in developing district-wide curricula in writing and in the uses of writing across the curriculum,

c) supporting the reduction of general courses in Education for prospective teachers to provide time and space in their degree and certification programs for courses in rhetoric and composition, literature, and other courses in the humanities;

3. the need to support and publicize the work of schools, colleges and universities using effective processes for building, articulating and implementing English Language Arts curricula that rests on the best of current theory and practice(as important as the finished curricular designs are the processes used by schools and colleges to formulate and implement those designs);

4. the need to examine, articulate and communicate within and outside the profession the place the humanities must hold in a healthy technological society. This should involve support for

a) reinstating courses in the humanities in the preparation of elementary school teachers,

b) balancing English Language Arts curricula at all levels(e.g., emphasis on reading instruction too often excludes other language arts instruction);

5. the need to monitor the impact of technology on curriculum and instruction in English Language Arts and to evaluate software and other technology on the market and intended for use in English Language Arts classrooms.

Eileen Lundy

The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52242

Afro-American Studies
303 English-Philosophy Building

(319) 353-6231

DEC 2 4 1983

December 21, 1983

REPORT ON TRENDS AND ISSUES IN LITERATURE

The Commission on Literature has identified eight trends and issues related to literature. Unfortunately, six of these are negative.

The first negative issue is related to students and schools. There seems to be a decline of the exposure of students to literature at all levels. For example, film scripts and television scripts are being substituted for traditional literature. Modern romances are being used for students. An additional cause of the decline is the fact that literature specialists are either giving up or are losing control of the library acquisitions. Librarians do not seem to be ordering traditional literary works as often as in the past.

A second issue relates to publishing houses. Even though publishing houses continue to produce the same total number of books as in the past, many publishers are issuing fewer literary works. At least one publisher is eliminating a very good edition of literature texts because the firm can no longer meet the competition from companies that offer cheaper editions. Publishers may be issuing more non-fiction because they believe that that more adequately meets the needs resulting from the emphasis on competency-testing in the schools.

Third, it seems to be a trend for school boards to insist that literature teachers use anthologies in the classroom. This means that teachers have less opportunity than in the past to use diverse literary works in their classrooms.

Fourth, censorship, which has long been a concern of NCTE, seems to be growing rather than diminishing. It scarcely seems necessary to call the attention of NCTE members to this trend.

Fifth, there seems to be an inadequate effort of the schools to train students to teach literature. One reason seems to be the belief that more emphasis needs to be given to preparing prospective teachers to learn how to teach reading skills and writing skills. There is also greater emphasis on preparing prospective teachers to learn testing methods. In contrast, there seems to be a belief that little effort is required to prepare teachers to teach literature. Consequently, even though many pre-service programs offer strong preparation in the teaching of literature for adolescents, they seem weak in teaching all other forms of literature.

Finally, there seems to be an unfortunate decline in the teaching of world literature. This decline seems especially unfortunate at a time at which there is a need for greater global concern.

There seem to be two positive trends. First, more literature of minorities is being included in the classrooms and in anthologies. Unfortunately, some teachers and editors continue to emphasize the sociological value of this material to the neglect of the aesthetic value.

Second, there seems to be a trend to emphasize story telling as literature. This trend seems to be growing both in the schools and in the communities surrounding the schools. As interest in story telling is developing, so there seems to be increasing interest in the oral dissemination of literature.

Respectfully submitted,

Darwin T. Turner
Director
Commission on Literature

DTT/seo

cc: Members of the Commission
Jane Christensen
Linda Johnson